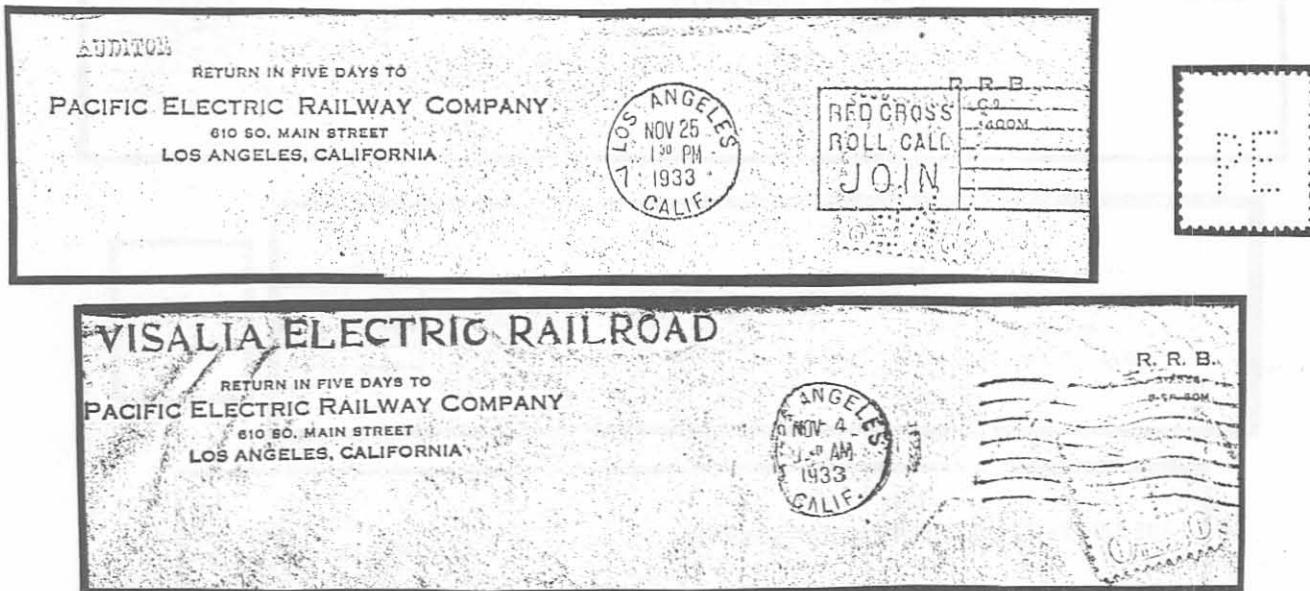


Background on U.S. Perfin Users

ELECTRIC RAILWAYS OF CALIFORNIA

BY EDWIN C. HAACK



PACIFIC ELECTRIC RAILWAY

The largest inter-city railway system in the United States was the Pacific Electric (Perfin P70), which, in its peak years, operated over 1,000 miles of track, and about 700 miles of service. The history of the system is very complex, and cannot be developed at length here.

The Pacific Electric was formed in September 1900 by the merger of eight companies, which all had been under common control, although some had started life as independent roads. The predecessors date back to 1895 when a line was completed from Los Angeles to Pasadena, and 1896, when the line via Hollywood to Santa Monica was finished. The bulk of the mileage was built during the next decade.

By 1915, the Pacific Electric was one of the finest electric railway properties in the country, with the most modern equipment. The road developed freight service at an early date, particularly carload traffic, with citrus fruits, oil, and inbound merchandise. But most of the revenues (typically about 75% - and 50% even as late as 1953) came from passenger service. Profits for a number of years were moderate, but not high. Traffic rose sharply up to 1923 as the area grew rapidly, and then fell as automobile use increased.

Between 1938 and 1941 a significant portion of the passenger service was abandoned, including the service to San Bernardino, Riverside and Pomona, San Gabriel and Temple, Yorba Linda, Fullerton and Whittier, Redondo and Newport Beach. Basically, the road was the victim of the productivity squeeze, and any attempts to avoid it were



PACIFIC ELECTRIC BUILDING, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

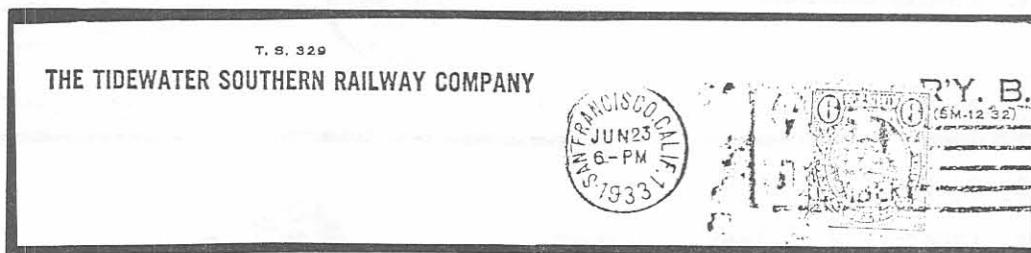
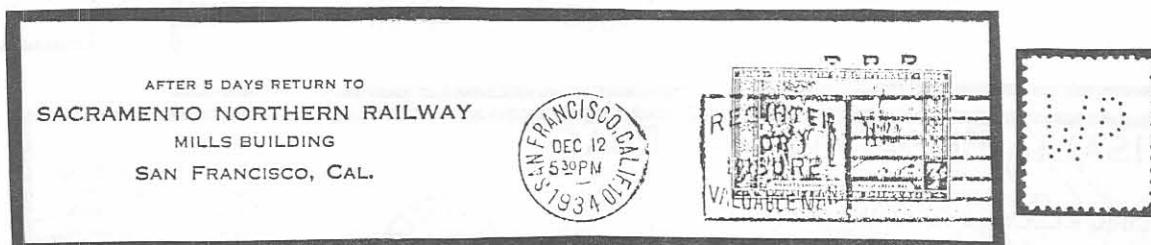
rendered difficult. Once the traffic volume began to fall again after the war, the road took steps to convert to freight-only operation.

In 1950, all remaining passenger service was abandoned except to Long Beach and San Pedro, and to Bellflower, Hollywood, and Burbank. In 1954, these remaining lines were sold. The difficulty was aggravated by absentee control for many years, by the Southern Pacific's general lack of interest after 1924 in local passenger service.

VISALIA ELECTRIC RAILROAD

The Visalia Electric Railroad (Perfin P70) operated several lines in the citrus-fruit area in Tulare County (in the southern part of the San Joaquin Valley). The line was built to Lemon Cove in 1905, but not

BACKGROUND ON U. S. PERFIN USERS (CONTINUED)



until March 1908 was electrification of this line and the line from Visalia to Exeter completed and passenger service established. Service was extended to Terminus in 1909, and to Elderwood on July 31, 1915. Most of the runs terminated at Woodlake, some cars going on to Elderwood and to Redbanks. A non-electrified line was built from Exeter south to Strathmore in 1916.

The passenger revenue reached its peak in 1912. By 1923 it had dropped quite substantially. In 1924, the company requested permission to discontinue passenger service. The Strathmore line was cut back to El Mirador in 1942 and to Fayette in 1953. The system was dieselized in 1944.

For a time the Visalia Electric operated the non-electric line from Chowchilla to Dairyland, in Madera County. It was abandoned after the Peninsular Railway began freight operations in the San Jose area.

CENTRAL CALIFORNIA TRACTION COMPANY

The second system to serve Sacramento was the Central California Traction Company (Perfin W154A), whose 53-mile main line connected the capital city with Stockton, with a branch line from the main line to Lodi.

The Stockton-Lodi line was built first, completed in September 1907. In August 1910, the main line from Lodi Junction into Sacramento was placed in operation. For a number of years the road was operated jointly with the separately owned Tidewater Southern. In

the early twenties the Southern Pacific sought to buy control, and was opposed by the Santa Fe and the Western Pacific. Finally, each was permitted by the I.C.C. to buy a one-third interest. Herbert Fleishacher remained as president, a post which he held for 30 years.

Almost from the first, the CCT built up a substantial freight business, and was a financial success, one of the few interurbans never in bankruptcy. But passenger revenue was hit by the automobile. First, the through service to Lodi was reduced to shuttle operation; then on February 5, 1933, all passenger service was suspended. However, even in the worst years of the depression, despite a drop in revenue, the line never encountered operating deficits. The line continued to operate the suburban Sacramento streetcar service on the main-line track until 1944, when all streetcar service in Sacramento was taken over by the Pacific City lines. In 1946, the road also eliminated electric operation in favor of diesel service. Since that time virtually no changes have occurred.

SACRAMENTO NORTHERN RAILWAY

The largest of the systems was the Sacramento Northern (Perfin W154A), whose 183-mile run from San Francisco to Chico was one of the longest through runs anywhere in the country. The SN was one of the best in-

BACKGROUND ON U. S. PERFIN USERS (CONT'D)

terurbans, from the standpoint of service, and it utilized a wide variety of types of equipment.

The Sacramento Northern of later years represented a consolidation of two long, separate and, in many ways, distinct types of lines. The northern lines, including those to Woodland and Vacaville, were originally the Northern Electric. The company purchased the Chico Street railway system from the Diamond Match Company in 1906. On April 26 of that year it completed the interurban line to Oroville, and in December it established south to Marysville. This segment was built with a third rail, which subsequently was used on all of the Northern Electric Lines. On September 7, 1907, through service was established to Sacramento.

Next came the branches. The first, completed October 31, 1907, was Chico to Hamilton. A second, July 4, 1912, Sacramento to Woodland. The third, June 13, 1913, Yuba City to Colusa. In 1926, a Union Station was built in Sacramento in conjunction with the Northern Electric and the Central California Traction Company.

The Oakland, Antioch and Eastern went into receivership and was reorganized in 1920 as the San Francisco-Sacramento Railroad, known as the Sacramento Short Line. In turn, the stock of the new road was purchased in 1927 by Western Pacific, which had bought the Sacramento Northern in 1922. In 1928, the two electric roads were merged.

The unprofitable Danville branch was abandoned in 1924, and, in 1926, the road eliminated service on the Vacaville branch. The last passenger operation of the company was the single-car Birney streetcar line in Chico, discontinued on December 14, 1947. Some of the roads still in use continue to be an important freight feeder for the parent Western Pacific.

TIDEWATER SOUTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY

The other line operating out of Stockton was the Tidewater Southern (Perfin W154A) built as an independent road, but a Western Pacific subsidiary after 1917. The road was never electrified in its entirety, and never was used electrically for freight service except in Modesto. The main line extended southeastward from Stockton to Escalon. The company never operated streetcar service.

Construction was begun in 1911, and in October of 1912, steam passenger service was opened from Stockton to Modesto. Electrification of this line was completed on November 15, 1913. In 1916, the line was extended to Turlock, and in 1917 to Hatch, but these lines never were electrified, and never operated passenger service. The company owned only three passenger cars. Service for a number of years was operated at one-hour intervals, but was cut back in the late twenties. All passenger service ended on May 26, 1932, and the section of track from Ortego into Stockton was abandoned.

The Tidewater Southern developed into an extremely significant feeder for the Western Pacific, and supplied an extensive volume of carload freight to the parent company. Except for the short period around 1930 when the passenger service was dragging the road, it continually showed (and still shows) a good profit, an unusual situation for what is essentially a branch-line operation.

(Historical data on the railways covered in this article was taken in part from the book, "The Electric Interurban Railways in America," by George W. Hilton and John F. Due, published by the Stanford University Press, Stanford, California.)